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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001284

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SUBJECT: NEW ITURI DISTRICT COMMISSIONER TRAVELS TO BUNIA
WITH OPTIMISTIC VISION

Classified By: Poloff Gons Nachman for Reasons 1.5 B and D

1. (C) Summary. New Ituri District Commissioner Petronille Vaweka traveled to Bunia on July 12 with a goal of improving security, resolving the IDP situation and rebuilding Ituri. Although she is a competent and determined individual, her effectiveness will be contingent on receiving support from the national and provincial governments. End Summary.

Petronille Vaweka's Vision for Ituri

2. (C) As part of its push to reintegrate the East, Kinshasa announced on June 28th the appointment of Petronille Vaweka as new district commissioner for Ituri. Her appointment effectively brings to an end the tenure of the Ituri Interim Administration (IIA) and restores normal district governance. Vaweka met with poloff on July 9th to discuss her vision for the region. She said that her top three priorities were improving security, the return of internally displaced people (IDPs) and reconstruction of Ituri. Vaweka noted that these issues were intertwined and that improving security was essential to the return of IDPs to their areas of origin and would also make it possible to rebuild the infrastructure and the economy of Ituri, which in turn, would also foster greater security.

3. (C) Vaweka acknowledged that she would have to work closely with MONUC in the area of security since the Congolese police in Ituri lack arms and all other basic equipment to function as a law and order entity. However, she said that she would also use her excellent relations with all relevant actors in Ituri to negotiate and encourage people to contribute to her vision for security and development of the area. She wants real DDR of militias and increased job opportunities for community re-insertion, especially in activities that would help improve the socio-economic situation such as repairing roads and rebuilding schools.

4. (C) Vaweka welcomes the Union of Congolese Patriots-Lubanga's (UPC-L) recent decision to become a political party. She said that now that UPC-L had officially been recognized by the GDRC as a political party, she would work to sensitize its members in Ituri to the importance of giving up violence and using political channels to participate in the democratic process. She noted that she would also try to persuade other militias in Ituri to evolve into political parties and to disarm and re-integrate into their communities.

Serious Challenges Remain

5. (C) The main challenge facing Vaweka as new District Commissioner is the lack of means to function as an effective administrator. She said that she is assuming her new post in Bunia on Monday, July 12, without any funds. The GDRC promised to send her one million Congolese francs (less than \$3,000) by the end of July, to fund her administration. There was also no indication of when she would receive a salary. Vaweka was planning on using the offices, computers, furniture and vehicles left by the Ituri Interim Administration for the new district administration.

6. (C) Vaweka explained that she had emphasized to President Kabila the importance of supporting the new administration in Ituri and showing that the GDRC was serious about incorporating the district back into Province Orientale and the DRC. She also said that she was ready to work with new Oriental Province Governor Theo Baruti, but wanted to avoid past practices in which Ituri supplied most of the revenues received by Kisangani and then sent to Kinshasa, but received virtually nothing in exchange. She wants an equitable distribution of revenues that would permit the effective administration and economic development of Ituri.

Comment

7. (C) Petronille Vaweka's appointment to lead the new Ituri administration is an encouraging sign. She is a competent and respected leader who has excellent relations with all relevant players in Ituri, including MONUC, Kinshasa, local

militias and community leaders. She has also maintained an optimistic and positive attitude even when faced by serious obstacles. However, without appropriate resources to pay staff and fund administrative activities, Vaweka's effectiveness could be severely limited.

SWAN